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# History of Landmines and Booby Traps

by  
Command Historian  
USAES

# **AGENDA**

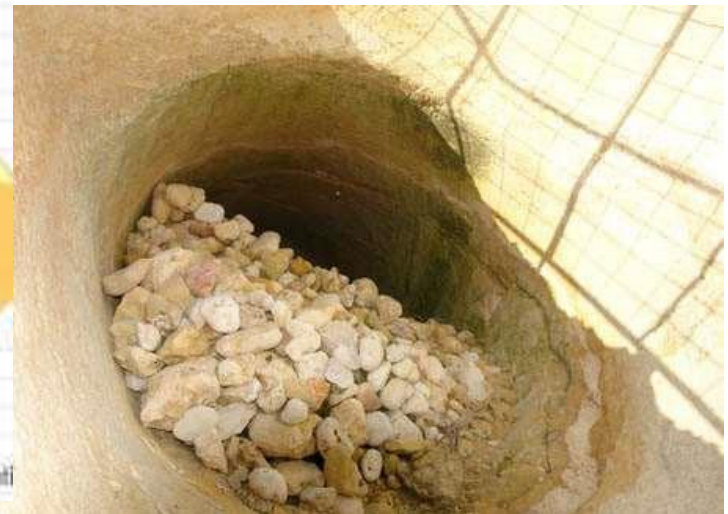
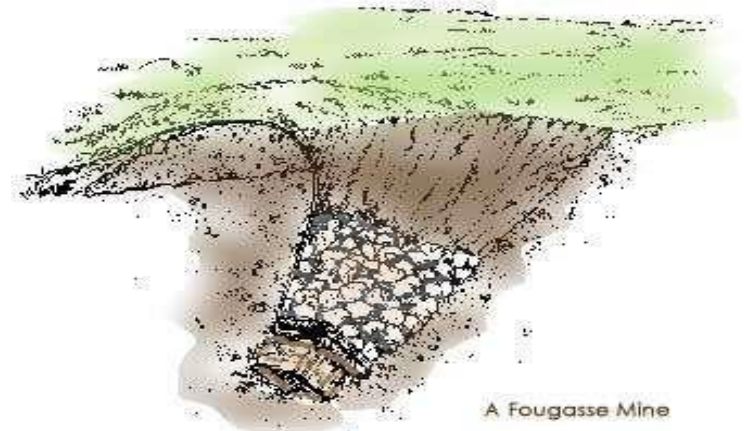
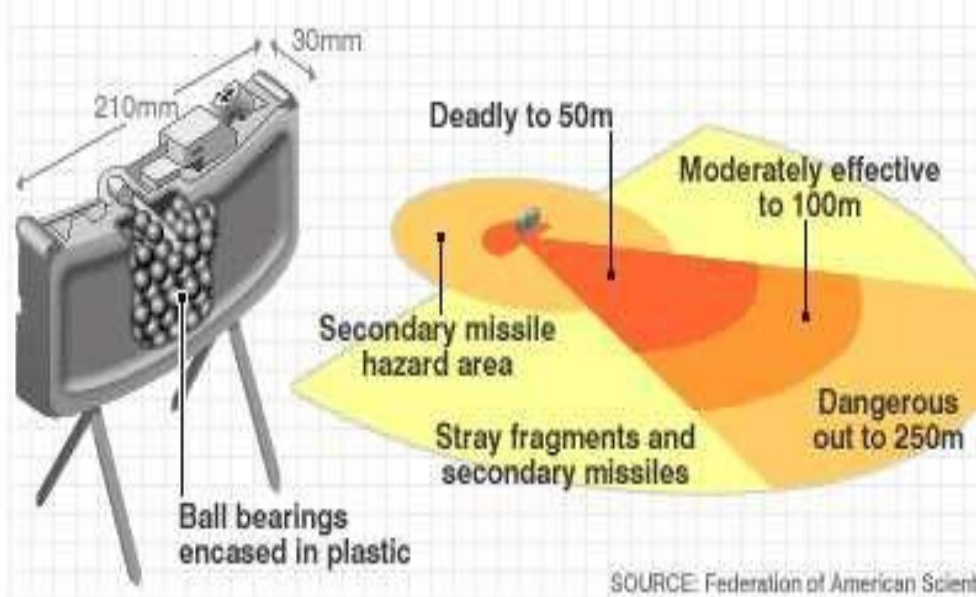
- **Historical survey of landmines**
- **Analysis of landmines and booby traps in Korean War and Vietnam War**
- **Analysis of American countermeasures in Korea and Vietnam**
- **Open discussion of patterns of continuity and change**

**“Men who will march bravely up through the blaze of [gunfire] will walk timidly over ground in which they suspect a hidden mine.”**

*--Farrow's Military Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of Military Knowledge (1885)*

- **Turn**
- **Block**
- **Fix**
- **Disrupt**
- **Kill or Maim**
- **FORCE MULTIPLIER**

- Concept of **MINE** warfare expanded with introduction of gunpowder after thirteenth century China! In sixteenth century Spain = *Fougasse* Later = Fladdermine = mine + grenades
- **Landmines as defensive weapons**
- survivability and counter-mobility
- anti-personnel and anti-vehicle



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# American Civil War

- CPT Gabriel Rains (CSA) “Torpedo” Mines = Artillery shells = First casualty Williamsburg 1862 Over 2000 deployed in combat AO.
- First mechanically fused
- Tripwire or Pressure
- **US response “Abhorrent and Cowardly”**
- 1880s British General Charles Gordon = “Landmines are the thing for defense in the future.”

# CSA Bomb Factory

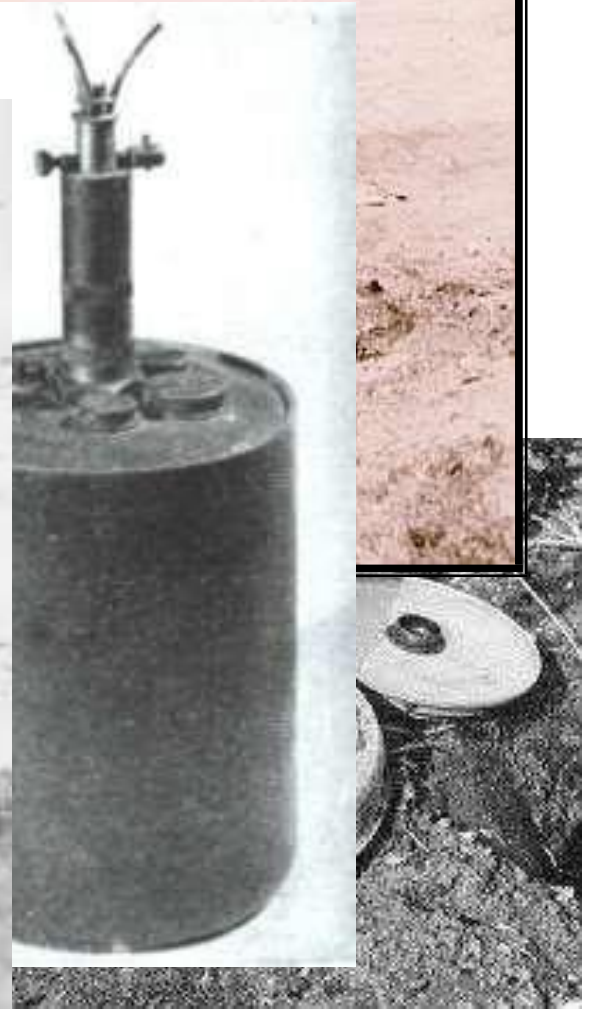
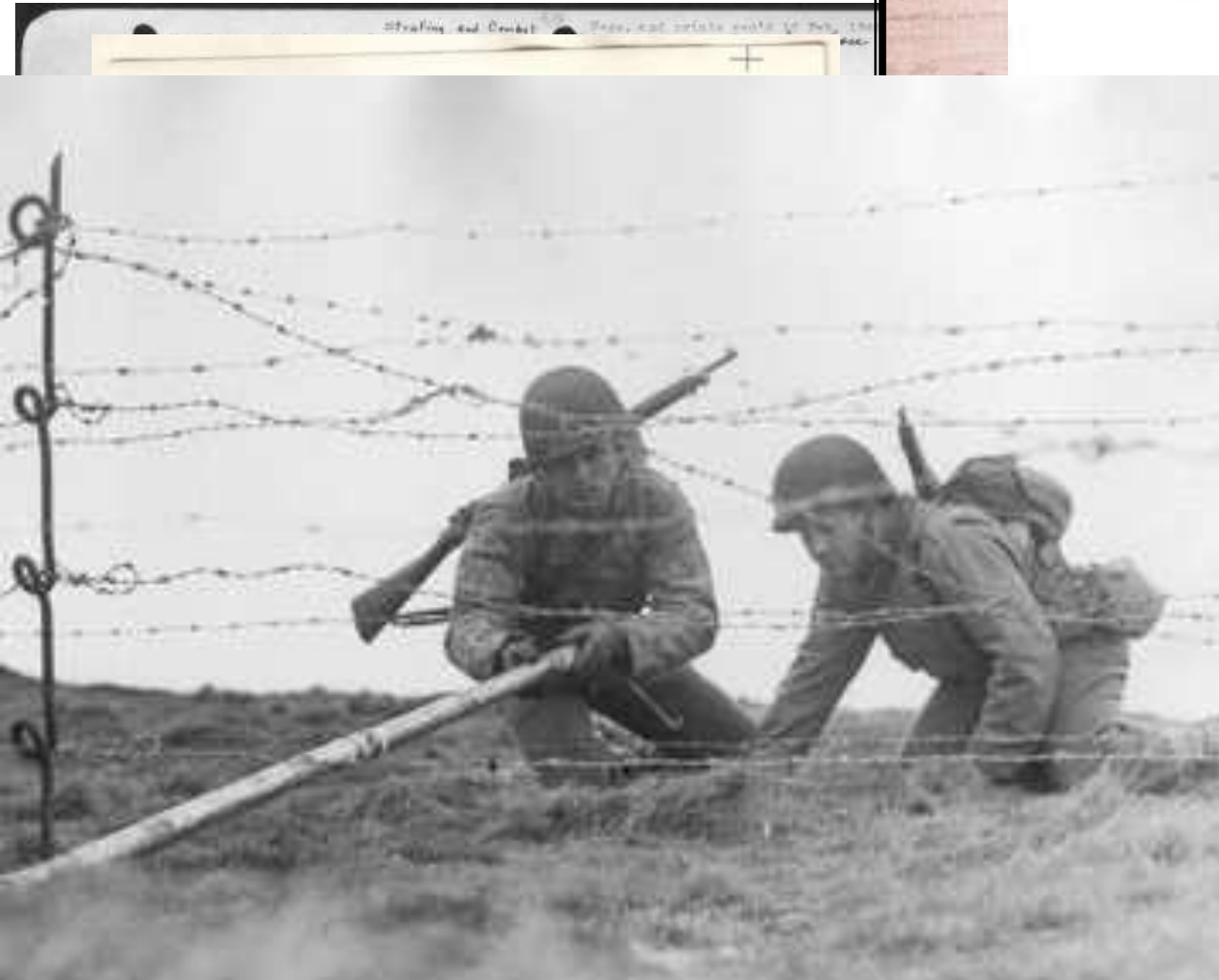


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# WORLD WAR II:

## Watershed for Mines and Booby traps AT/AP

Mobility and Counter-mobility → Personnel and Vehicles



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# Korean War, 1950-1953



**1 American vehicle lost  
per 80 landmines**

**Culture and  
Terrain as Factors**



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## American countermeasures



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# Korea / DMZ

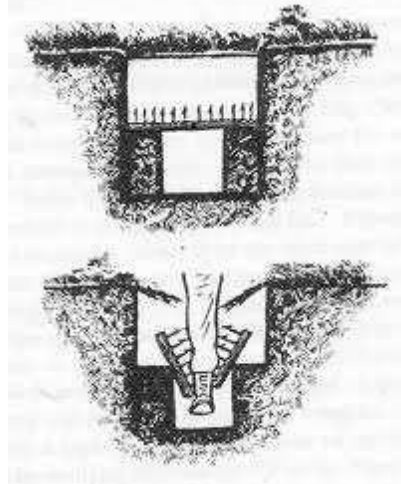
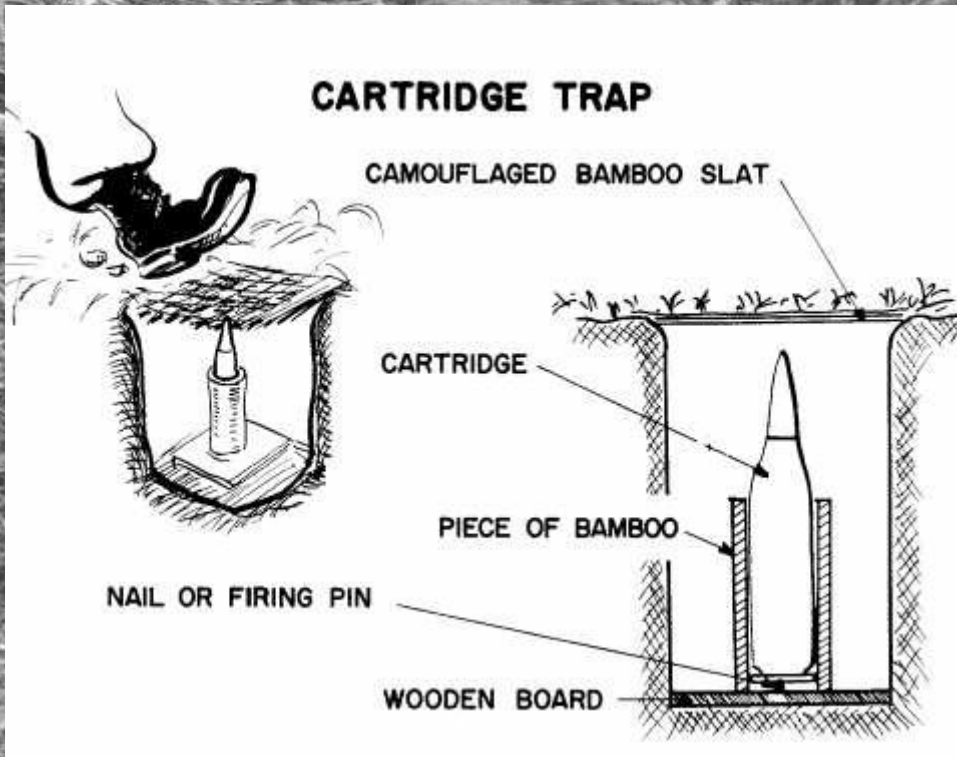
- DMZ 160 miles long 2 ½ miles wide = M15 , M21 AT and M16 AP mines + agent orange



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# Vietnam:

## Enemy land mines and booby traps (IEDs)



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# 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Vietnam

## 1-30 April 1969

- **Detection:** Visual 60%, Detonate 30 %, Equip 10%
- **Location:** Jungle/Trail 55%, Road/Structure 20%, Canal/Stream/Rice Paddy 25%
- **Times:** Detections  
0800-1200 Detonations  
1400-1700
- **Casualties:** 46% of events were multiple casualties
- **Firing Device:** Tripwire 72%, Pressure 17%, Command 4%
- **Types:** Chinese grenade 55%, US UXO 20%, VC homemade 10%, and Unknown 15%
- **1-30 April 1969:** the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> ID suffered **16 KIA and 400 WIA** in 206 landmine/booby trap incidents – vice 230 detonated with no losses



Source: <http://www.history.army.mil/books/Vietnam/Sharpen/ch06.htm>

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# Vietnam:

## American countermeasures



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# Vietnam:

## American countermeasures



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Read clearance on a  
road near **DAK TO**  
in June 1969...

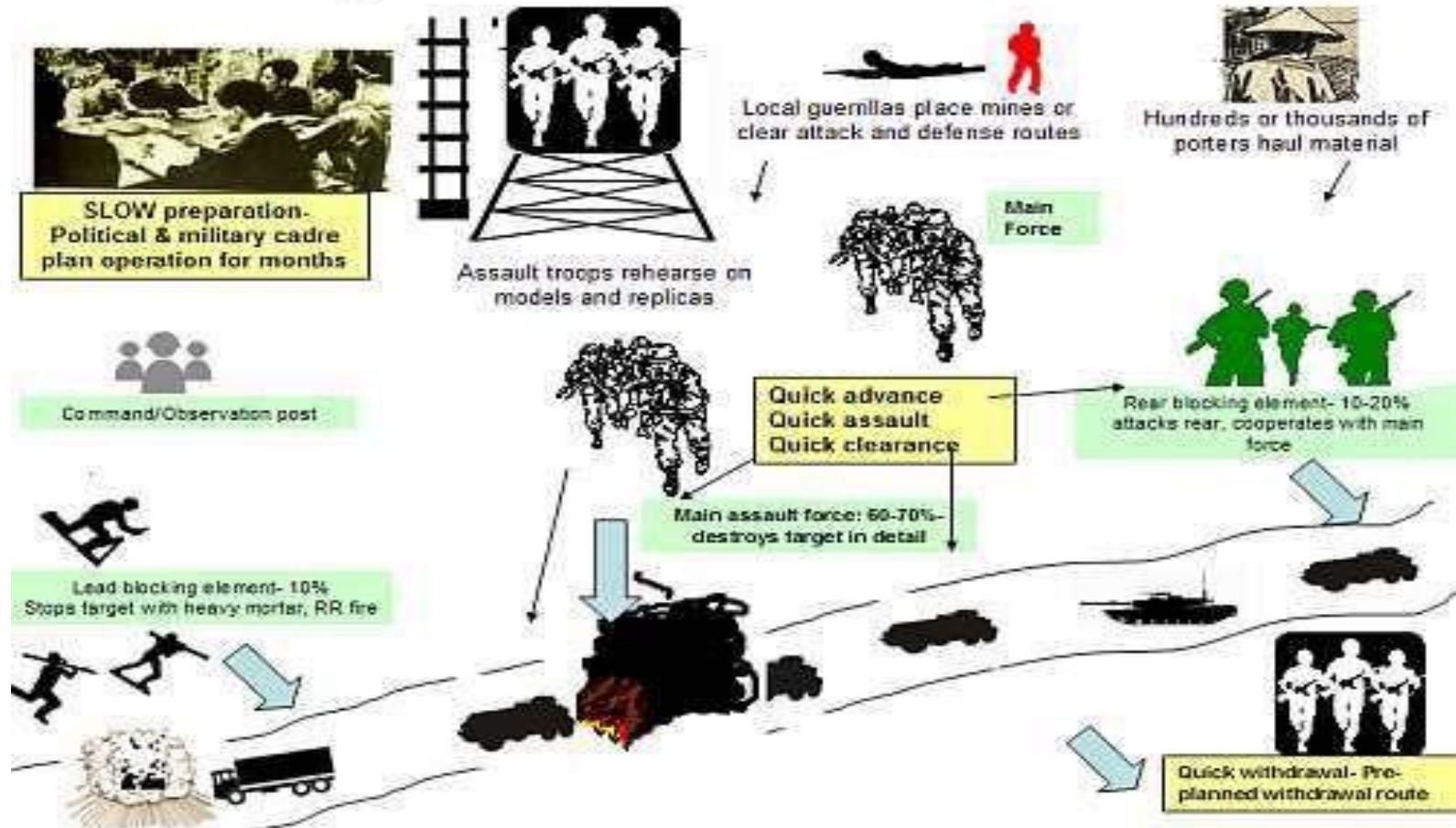


*According to an engineer in the 299th, "It was like a bad dream. [The North Vietnamese] hit us with everything they had, and it just plain overwhelmed us. There was no other explanation. We just walked into a beautiful ambush. We were completely pinned down and all we could do was fire back to keep them from getting closer and wait for the air strikes."*

# Vietnam:

## Dangers of ambush

One slow, four quick: VC/NVA attack doctrine



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# Open Discussion:

- What **trends** or **differences** can be seen in using booby traps and landmines over time?
- Do **conventional** or **unconventional** conflicts change the ways landmines and booby traps can be used?
- **What lessons can be learned and insights applied to YOUR missions in today's fight?**
- What **specific examples** can be found in the Handout?

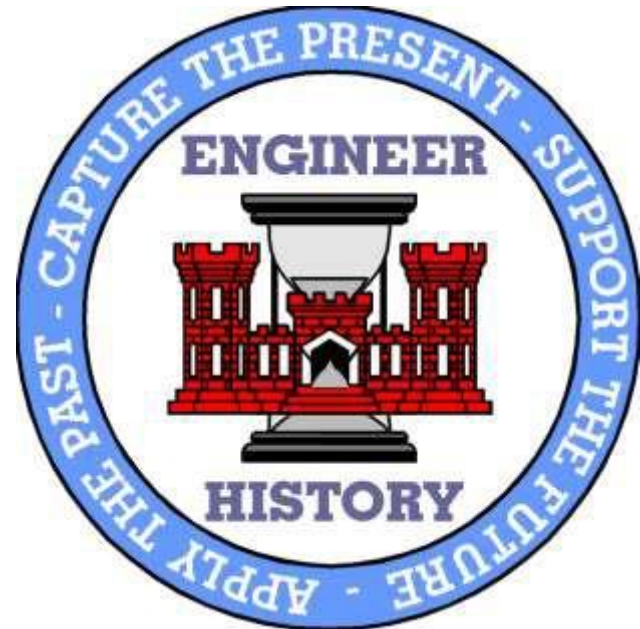
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